

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8955
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 4289

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, PINT, LE, SY
SUBJ: REPRESENTATIONS TO SYRIANS ON BEIRUT FIGHTING

REF: STATE 188245

SUMMARY: CHARGE INFORMED ACTING FONMIN QADDUR OF DEEP U.S. CONCERN OVER LATEST INCIDENTS IN LEBANON AND REQUESTED THAT SYRIAN FORCES, ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS ALONE, CEASE THEIR BOMBARDMENT OF THE BEIRUT AREA. QADDUR NOTED THAT ADF HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO USE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT IN IGNORING PROVOCATIONS AND KEEPING RESPONSES LIMITED. QADDUR WELCOMED CHARGE'S ASSURANCES THAT U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO PRESSURE ISRAEL AND MILITIA LEADERS. IT DID NOT SEEM TO HIM THAT U.S. EFFORTS HAD HAD MUCH EFFECT TO THIS POINT. END SUMMARY.

1. CHARGE MET WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER QADDUR AND DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS SIAGE JULY 26 TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL. AFTER DESCRIBING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF LATEST INCIDENTS AND CLASHES IN AL-HADATH BASED

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ON REPORTS FROM EMBASSY BEIRUT, CHARGE SAID U.S. WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THIS LATEST INTENSIFICATION OF FIGHTING. U.S. WAS REQUESTING THAT SYRIAN FORCES, ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS ALONE, CEASE THEIR BOMBARDMENT OF THE BEIRUT AREA. WHATEVER THE PROVOCATIONS WERE AGAINST SYRIAN FORCES, THEIR RESPONSE WAS LIKELY TO BE SEEN AS DISPROPORTIONATE. THEY WILL RISK BEING CRITICIZED BY

INTERNATIONAL OPINION IN A WAY WHICH WILL TEND TO UNDO MUCH OF WHAT SYRIAN HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE IN PAST TWO YEARS IN ENDING CIVIL CONFLICT AND IN PRESERVING SECURITY AND LAW AND ORDER.

2. CHARGE SAID THAT U.S. FOR ITS PART WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE WHAT ACTIONS IT COULD TO CALM THIS SITUATION. HE BRIEFLY REVIEWED EFFORTS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE TO DATE WITH ISRAEL, MARONITE LEADERS AND OTHERS IN THIS REGARD. U.S., HE SAID, BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT THAT CEASE FIRE REMAIN IN FORCE SO THAT NEGOTIATIONS FOR DISENGAGEMENT WITH THE MILITIAS CAN BE PURSUED.

3. CHARGE SAID U.S. APPRECIATES AND UNDERSTANDS DIFFICULTIES ADF FORCES ARE FACING IN LEBANON AND RESTRAINT BEING SHOWN IN MANY PARTS OF BEIRUT. U.S. WISHES TO COOPERATE WITH SYRIAN IN HELPING TO ACHIEVE RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE CAUSED THE FIGHTING. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT BOMBARDMENT OF CIVILIAN AREAS, EVEN WHEN SUCH BOMBARDMENT IS PROVOKED, WILL ACHIEVE DESIRED SOLUTION. ON THE CONTRARY, THESE TACTICS ACTUALLY RESULT IN AROUSING IRE OF CHRISTIAN POPULACE AGAINST SYRIA AND UPSETTING INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION.

4. QADDUR NOTED THAT WE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED SITUATION IN LEBANON MANY TIMES. THE ADF, HE SAID, HAS PERMANENT SECRET

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INSTRUCTIONS TO USE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT, BOTH IN IGNORING PROVOCATIONS AND IN KEEPING NECESSARY RESPONSES TO THE MINIMUM LEVEL REQUIRED TO SILENCE SOURCES OF FIRE AND DISCOURAGE THE MILITIAS FROM CONTINUING SUCH ACTIONS. ADF FORCES WERE ABIDING BY THESE INSTRUCTIONS, QADDUR ASSERTED. WAS IT POSSIBLE, HE THEN ASKED, THAT SOME OF OUR SOURCES WERE ATTRIBUTING TO ADF THE RANDOM ROCKET AND MORTAR BARRAGES EMPLOYED BY MILITIAS TO HEAT UP SITUATION.

5. AS FOR ORIGIN OF JULY 25 INCIDENTS, QADDUR CONTINUED, FIVE OR SIX MORTAR SHELLS WERE FIRED ON ADF AT ABOUT 1630 AS A RESULT OF WHICH A SOLDIER WAS WOUNDED. A ROCKET WAS THEN FIRED AT A SYRIAN VEHICLE WHICH WAS TOTALLY DESTROYED. PHALANGIST GROUPS IN AL HADATH AND PAHALANGE AND OTHER ARMED MEN IN AIN ROUMENEH AND HAZIMIYIA OPENED FIRE ON ADF FORCES WITH MORTARS, HEAVY MACHINE GUNS AND ROCKETS. ADF COULD NOT IGNORE AN ATTACK OF THIS STRENGTH AND WAS OBLIGED TO RETURN FIRE TO SILENCE THE PROVOCATEURS. RESPONSE WAS NOT INTENDED TO HURT INNOCENT PARTIES BUT TO INDUCE MILITIAS TO OBSERVE CEASE FIRE. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES SOME CIVILIAN CASUALTIES WERE LIKELY,

ESPECIALLY WHEN MILITIA OPENED FIRE FROM INHABITED
BUILDINGS, BUT SYRIA GREATLY REGRETTED ANY SUCH CASUALTIES.

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6. QADDUR SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO HEAR ASSURANCES THAT US
WOULD CONTINUE TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL AND MILITIA
LEADERS WITH THE AIM OF RESTORING LAW AND ORDER IN BEIRUT
AND FORESTALLING NEW PROVOCATIONS AGAINST FORCES OF THE
LEGITIMATE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. AS FAR AS SYRIA CAN SEE,
HOWEVER, ISRAEL HAS NOT RESPONDED TO U.S. PRESSURE.
MILITIAS WOULD NOT BE ACTING IN THIS AGGRESSIVE MANNER
WITHOUT ISRAELI BACKING AND SUPPORT. IN FACT, WHENEVER
LEBANESE GOVERNMENT REACHED THE POINT OF DECISION ON
SENDING LEBANESE ARMED FORCES SOUTH IT SEEMED THAT THE
MILITIA CREATED NEW INCIDENTS IN BEIRUT. THIS WAS
FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE RESPONDING TO ISRAELI
DIRECTION AND WERE CONFIDENT OF ISRAELI SUPPORT. FOR
ITS PART SYRIA WOULD CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO
REESTABLISH SECURITY IN LEBANON WHICH HAD SUFFERED MORE
THAN ITS SHARE OF TRAGEDY. QADDUR SAID OBJECTIVES OF
ADF HAD NOT CHANGED AND WERE WELL KNOWN TO USG.

7. CHARGE NOTED THAT NEWS REACHING U.S. FROM
RELATIVES OF LEBANESE-AMERICANS AND FROM DIRECT REPORTING
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BY JOURNALISTS BASED IN LEBANON OFTEN TENDED TO HEADLINE ANY MAJOR SYRIAN RETALIATION WHILE GENERALLY GLOSSING OVER SYRIAN RESTRAINT. PHALANGE PROPAGANDISTS IN WASHINGTON WERE ALSO ACTIVE. THIS WAS HAVING AN EFFECT ON THE WAY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE VIEWED SYRIA'S ROLE. IN ADDITION, SYRIA'S OWN PRESS WAS TAKING A VERY HARD LINE AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS PREPARING SYRIAN PUBLIC OPINION FOR MORE FIGHTING.

8. QADDUR SAID SYRIAN MEDIA WERE ONLY REFLECTING SYRIA'S OFFICIAL POSITION. SYRIA HAD SAID TIME AND AGAIN IT WOULD NOT KEEP SILENT IN THE FACE OF PARTITIONISTS AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT SECURITY IN LEBANON. SYRIA WAS OPPOSED TO ANY PARTY OR GROUP WHICH TRIED TO UNDERMINE SECURITY IN LEBANON OR HINDER REESTABLISHMENT OF LEGITIMATE LEBANESE AUTHORITY.

9. ASKED ABOUT HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATUS OF DISENGAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS, QADDUR SAID ONLY A LITTLE PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE AND MORE TIME WAS NEEDED. SYRIA WAS NOT ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS AND HAD NOT BEEN REQUESTED BY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO BECOME INVOLVED. SYRIAN MILITARY FORCES, HOWEVER, WERE IN LEBANON TO HELP THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND SYRIA WOULD BE READY TO HELP IN POLITICAL AS WELL AS MILITARY AREAS IF IT WOULD HELP LEBANON OVERCOME ITS DIFFICULTIES.

10. IN CONCLUSION, CHARGE RESTATED US CONCERN ABOUT LATEST FIGHTING AND OUR DESIRE TO WORK WITH SYRIA TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN A UNIFIED LEBANESE STATE. TO MAINTAIN THAT POSITION IN LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS PRESSURES UPON AS IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE CONTINUE TO SAY IN
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REGULAR TOUCH WITH SYRIA ON LEBANON AND THAT WE BOTH DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE. PERHAPS, CHARGE SUGGESTED, SYRIA COULD REINFORCE THE INSTRUCTIONS TO ADF UNITS TO SHOW MAXIMUM RESTRAINT. QADDUR NODDED HIS AGREEMENT.
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